

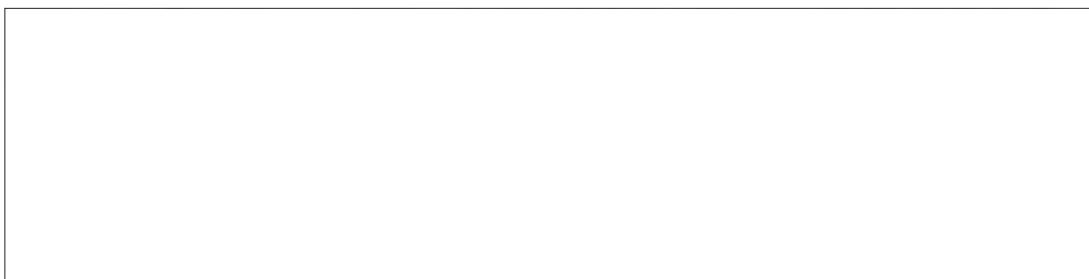
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NIO/EUR
9 December 1986

POLAND: THE NEW CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL

The formation of the long-awaited social advisory council does nothing to alter the fundamental stalemate between state and society in Poland. Indeed, with a membership even less impressive than had been expected, the council is not likely to achieve the regime's minimal goals of lending a measure of legitimacy to the government and its policies.

-- Walesa and most other opposition figures have dismissed the council as a cosmetic body that does not represent Polish society. The two former Solidarity leaders on the council are widely seen as traitors to the movement.



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Still, the inclusion in the council of several prominent lay Catholic intellectuals and former Solidarity advisors lends some respectability to the council, at least potentially. The key question is how far the regime is prepared to go to breathe life into the new body.

- Political pluralism is hardly on the regime's agenda, but Jaruzelski does hope to use the council -- to legitimize the so-called "normalization," mitigate economic austerity measures, further divide the opposition, and affect a lifting of the remaining US sanctions.
- To achieve those ends, the regime must invest the council with some influence and independence, while at the same time assuring that it does not become a separate power center. Squaring that circle has been the regime's dilemma since martial law.

Based on the Polish regime's track record so far, the prospects are not encouraging for the kind of genuine national dialogue on which we have been insisting.

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